

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 8170

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SUBJECT: EXCHANGE OF SHIP VISITS WITH SOVIETS

REF: A. MOSCOW 8043 DTG 071000Z JUL 73

B. MOSCOW 7848 DTG 241216Z MAY 74

C. MOSCOW 7966 DTG 281021Z MAY 74

D. MOSCOW 15694 DTG 171252Z DEC 73

1. SUMMARY. IF AN EXCHANGE OF US AND SOVIET NAVAL SHIP VISITS IS CONTEMPLATED FOR THIS SUMMER, TIME IS ALREADY LATE FOR FINALIZING DETAILS. END SUMMARY.

2. BACKGROUND.

A. DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS INCREASING CONTACT WITH THE SOVIET NAVY AND MERCHANT MARINE HAS FEATURED SUCCESSFUL USCG AND USNS SHIP VISITS TO MURMANSK, NAKHODKA, ODESSA AND NOVOROSIYSK. 3 - 8 JUNE THE "STATE OF MAINE", TRAINING SHIP OF THE MAINE MARITIME ACADEMY, IS SCHEDULED TO MAKE THE FIRST VISIT OF A US VESSEL TO LENINGRAD. DURING THE PAST YEAR FRENCH, DANISH AND

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SWEDISH NAVAL VESSELS HAVE CALLED AT LENINGRAD AND

ITALIAN DESTROYERS HAVE CALLED AT SEVASTOPOL. EACH OF THESE VISITS HAS OCCURRED WITHOUT INCIDENTS, PROVIDING GOOD VISIBILITY FOR THE SHIPS AND NATIONS INVOLVED.

B. DURING THE SAME PERIOD THE SOVIETS HAVE SHOWN INCREASED INTEREST IN AN EXCHANGE OF US AND SOVIET NAVAL VISITS. DURING INITIAL INCSEA DISCUSSIONS, ACCORDING TO US INCSEADEL, VADM LEONENKOV, COMMANDER LENINGRAD NAVAL BASE, URGED VADM WEINEL TO SEND AN IMPORTANT NAVAL VESSEL TO LENINGRAD, PROMISING THAT, IF HE DID SO, IT WOULD BE MOORED ON THE NEVA RIVER, IN THE HEART OF LENINGRAD. AS REPORTED REF (A), IN HIS FIRST CONVERSATION WITH RADM MAYO, ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET KASATONOV URGED AN EXCHANGE OF SHIP VISITS, SAYING THAT SOVIETS WOULD SEND THEIR NEWEST SHIP, A KARA CLASS CRUISER, WHICH WE KNOW TO BE COMMANDED BY KASATONOV'S SON. REF (B) REPORTS, INTER ALIA, THE VISIT OF THE US INCSEADEL TO A KASHIN CLASS DLG IN ODESSA. REF (C) RELAYS A MESSAGE VIA DATT MOSCOW SHOWING STRONG INTEREST IN SHIP VISITS. REF (D) REPORTS LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT VISIT EXCHANGES, HIGHLIGHTING THE LONG LEAD-TIME REQUIRED FOR A SUCCESSFUL EXCHANGE.

C. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE QUESTION REMAINS UNDER CONSIDERATION IN WASHINGTON.

3. THE PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE IS NOT TO ARGUE FOR OR AGAINST AN EXCHANGE OF VISITS, WHICH WOULD BE A HIGH VISIBILITY STEP REQUIRING CAREFUL CONSIDERATION. WE

MERELY WISH TO REGISTER THAT THE OPTION IS OPEN, IN VIEW OF HIGH SOVIET INTEREST, AND TO NOTE THAT IF AN EXCHANGE IS TO OCCUR THIS YEAR, A DECISION MUST BE MADE VERY SOON. THE FOLLOWING FACTORS APPLY:

A. FRENCH EXPERIENCE (REF D) INDICATES THAT LEAD TIME FROM FIRM AGREEMENT TO ACTUAL VISIT SHOULD BE MORE THAN SIXTY DAYS.

B. LENINGRAD IS THE OBVIOUS PORT FOR US VISIT AND
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WEATHER THERE DETERIORATES RAPIDLY STARTING IN SEPTEMBER.

C. MODERN SHIPS ABLE TO COMPARE FAVORABLY WITH THE KARA, OR EVEN THE KASHIN, ARE PROBABLY IN SHORT SUPPLY, REQUIRING CONSIDERABLE SCHEDULING LEAD-TIME.
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